

protection from floods to a large area of valuable land on the Hauraki Plains. This scheme was carried out solely from Government funds, and it was followed by such schemes as the Taieri Plains, Waimakariri, Hawke's Bay, and others, to all of which the local bodies concerned contributed varying proportions of the costs and, in some cases, carried out the actual construction.

It was realized many years ago, however, that some of the problems were quite beyond the capacity and resources of the local bodies to deal with single-handed, and in 1919 an Engineering Commission was set up to investigate the question of flood-control and to formulate general schemes for some of the larger rivers. These investigations were made by the Commission, and some of the schemes since carried out were based on the Commission's recommendations.

It became obvious that far-reaching legislation was necessary to meet the situation adequately, and, in 1929, the Department of Internal Affairs drafted a Bill consolidating and improving existing legislation to make better provision for the drainage of land and the protection of property from damage by floods and erosion of rivers. The Bill, however, was not proceeded with.

About the same time proposals were made by the Public Works Department that certain officers of the Department should be definitely allocated to investigate flood-control problems. Nothing was done, however, in the matter of so allocating officers, but the Department continued to make investigations as opportunity offered.

Other State Departments vitally interested in questions of erosion generally and of soil deterioration were also conducting investigations, since it was recognized that these matters were intimately connected with flooding and river-control.

Soon after the present Government came into office the Public Works Department was instructed to collect information to enable a long-range flood-control policy to be considered. A great amount of information was collated, and early in 1937 certain recommendations were made to the Government. These were approved, but for various reasons it was not found possible at that time to prepare legislation to deal with the position. The work of investigation was, however, continued by the Public Works Department and by Inter-departmental Committees which were set up in various districts to collect data on soil-erosion and flood-control.

Another Bill was drafted in 1938, but this was considered inadequate to the complex problem and was dropped, and the matter stood in abeyance until the beginning of the present year, when the proposals forming the basis of this Committee's inquiry were put forward.

Copies of the proposals referred to the Committee were sent out to over two hundred County Councils, River Boards, and Drainage Boards, as well as to certain major organizations, such as the Counties Association, the Municipal Association, the Farmers' Union, and others for their comments, criticism, and suggestions.

The Committee received replies from more than half the local bodies circularized, and it heard orally over sixty witnesses. Members of the Committee also visited North Canterbury, Westland, and Hawke's Bay, all being areas of different types.

Among the witnesses who gave valuable evidence were Engineers of the Public Works Department and of certain major River Boards and County Councils, and specialist officers on soil utilization, soil-protection, and classification of lands from the Departments of Lands, Agriculture, State Forest Service, Scientific and Industrial Research, and Valuation.

The Committee early came to the conclusion that the problems before it were closely inter-related and could be dealt with only by a comprehensive and national long-term plan, the full fruition of which would not become apparent for many years.

It was also realized that by far the greater portion of the financial burden of such a plan must fall on the State, but the evidence before it of the steadily increasing damage to the economic life of the Dominion led the Committee to the unanimous decision that the adoption of remedial measures should be no longer delayed.

The Committee was the more convinced that the formulation of such measures should be put in hand at once as it became apparent that the mere organization of a national plan would occupy a considerable period and that financial considerations, as well as the need for careful exploratory steps in individual districts, would restrict the putting into operation of such a plan to a gradual process.

The original proposals referred to the Committee related mainly to the prevention or minimizing of damage by floods and erosion, and the principal objections taken to these proposals by local authorities were (a) that they proposed to create new local bodies with rating-powers and (b) that they tended to the abolition of existing local bodies.

Other objections relating to the constitution of Boards and the voting-powers of electors and ratepayers have been met, as far as possible, by the scheme now recommended by the Committee.

The Committee is of opinion that any comprehensive scheme capable of dealing with the whole complex situation, and at the same time affording a measure of local control, will require the creation of a certain number of Boards with greater powers than those now held by local authorities; but this does not mean the abolition of all local authorities dealing with river and flooding problems. On the contrary, the Committee visualizes the enlargement, in powers and in areas controlled, of existing major, effective local bodies, perhaps with some changes in representation.

Provision, however, is made for the absorption of smaller local authorities where their operations are not co-ordinated to produce the maximum benefit or are ineffective through lack of revenue. Evidence showed that, not infrequently, the operations of a local authority placed extra burdens on